

Rocky Mountain National Park News Release

August 1, 2005
For Immediate Release
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Search Continues for Missing Park Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park staff continue their search today for a park ranger that was last seen by his co-workers at 11 a.m. at the Chapin Pass Trailhead off Old Fall River Road on Friday, July 29. Jeff Christensen was planning a backcountry patrol to the Lawn Lake Trailhead that evening. He did not contact park dispatch that evening and did not arrive for his shift on Saturday.

On Sunday, over 50 people were involved. Along with park staff were Larimer County Search and Rescue, Grand County Search and Rescue, Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Front Range Rescue Dogs & Larimer County Search and Rescue dogs and park volunteers. Two helicopters assisted in Sunday's efforts. A Bell 407 helicopter from Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) with Department of Energy along with a Lama helicopter contracted by the United States Forest Service. This Lama helicopter was brought to the Front Range area for fire severity and is currently based out of Fort Collins. The WAPA helicopter is equipped with an infrared device which will be used for its heat seeking capability. The helicopters are being used to preposition searchers and conduct aerial searches. Today, over 125 people are participating in the search efforts. Also planned is the involvement of a specialized team of personnel from other National Park Service units in the Intermountain Region to assist with managing search efforts. The same helicopter operations that took place yesterday will

take place again today. Searchers will continue to intensify their efforts in certain areas of the Mummy Range. Efforts made yesterday by searchers will assist in concentrating areas of search activities today. So far, there has been no sign of Jeff.

The search area covers roughly 8 to 12 square miles with extreme elevation. Searchers are focusing today on steep hazardous terrain along the east side of Jeff's intended route of travel. There are several likely areas that people might typically descend to Lawn Lake and the Lawn Lake Trail that we will focus on as well.

In addition to the search and rescue groups who assisted park staff yesterday are El Paso County Search and Rescue, Routt County Search and Rescue, Gilpin County Search and Rescue and Search and Rescue Dogs of Colorado and employees from Winter Park Ski Resort.

An intensive search began early on Saturday morning with over 25 rangers and other park staff covering numerous trails and drainages in the Mummy Range in the northern part of Rocky Mountain National Park. The WAPA helicopter was involved with taking searchers to key locations and searching by air. Larimer County Search and Rescue assisted yesterday as well.

The Mummy Range is a remote, high altitude, rugged area which includes Mount Chapin, Mount Chiquita, Ypsilon Mountain and Desolation Peaks. There are few designated trails in the area and hiking mainly occurs cross country.

Jeff is 31-years-old and is an experienced mountaineer. He is extremely fit and capable of covering long distances in a short period of time. Although Jeff was not intending to spend the night he had a backpack with a variety of gear. He also had a park radio with him, however, in some drainages radio coverage is spotty or his battery could have run out. This is his fourth season as a park ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park. Jeff is an EMT (Emergency Medical

Technician) and has worked ski patrol at Winter Park for the past seven years. His hometown is Fraser, Colorado.

Park officials are asking for help from visitors who might have seen Jeff in the Mummy Range area on Friday or Saturday to contact the park at (970) 586-1204 to help determine where he might have been seen last.

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